



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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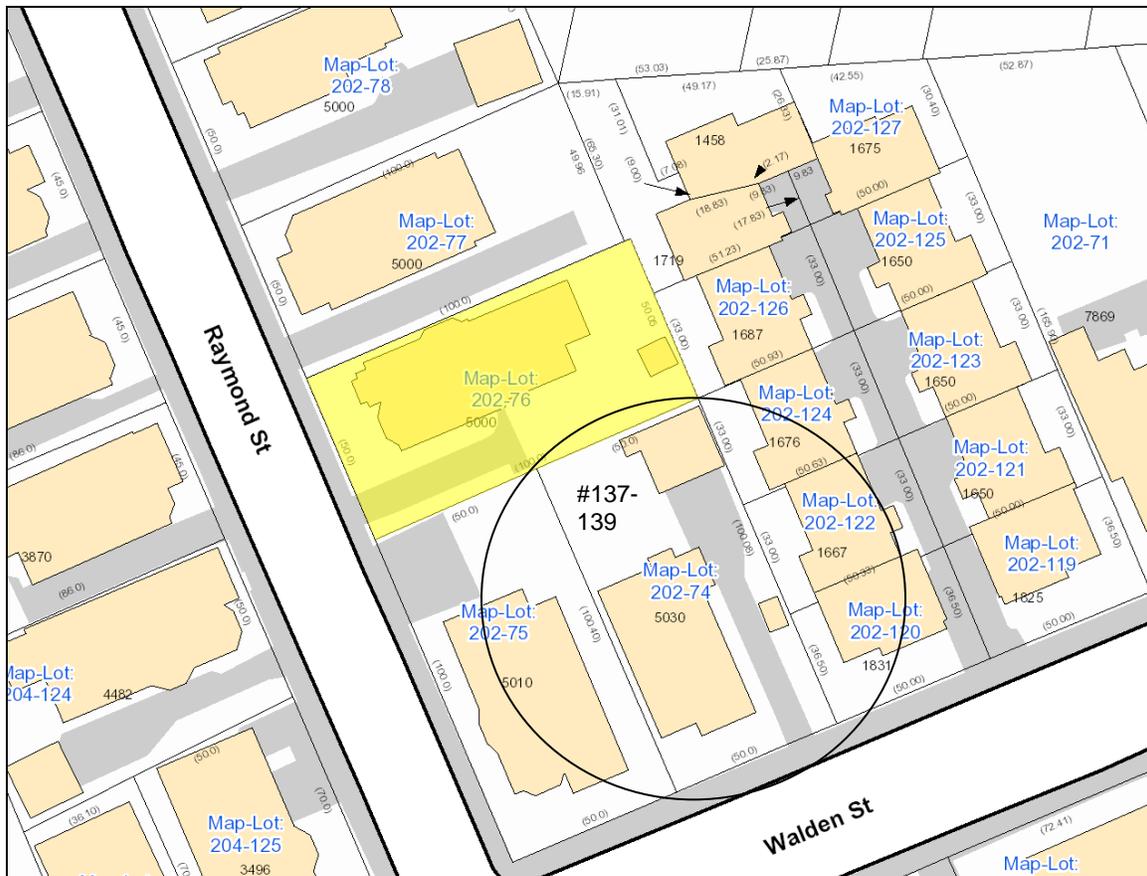
July 31, 2015

To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Charles Sullivan
Re: D-1370: Mary Brogan house, 137-139 Walden Street (1893)

An application to demolish the structure at 137-139 Walden Street was received on July 28, 2015. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for August 6.

Site

The structure, a two-story two-family dwelling, is located on the north side of Walden Street near the corner of Raymond Street.



137-139 Walden Street. Cambridge GIS, Assessor's map, June 2011.

The house is sited on a 5,029 square-foot lot in a Residence C-1 zone. This is a multi-family residential zone, which permits an FAR of .75 and has a height limit of 35 feet. The assessed value of the land and building, according to the online assessor's property database, is \$864,200 (Map 202/Parcel 74).



137-139 Walden St. center, with 143 Walden St. at left and Walden Mews at right. July 2015. CHC photo.

The neighboring properties include a two-story Colonial Revival duplex at 143 Walden Street and the large U-shaped, 11-unit Walden Mews development (1986). Across the street is a mixture of mostly two-family houses from ca. 1900-1925. Behind 137-139 Walden a modern residence at 151 Raymond Street replaced an 1875 house in 2011.

Architectural Description

The building at 137-139 Walden Street is a two-story side-hall house with a hip roof built in 1893. The major distinguishing feature is a second-level enclosed porch that projects over the entrance. The house is covered with brick-pattern asphalt siding on the first floor

and wood shingles on the second. The roof is covered with tan asphalt shingles and is in fair condition. A driveway is located to the east of the house.



137-139 Walden St. July 2015.

The new owner proposes to demolish the house and construct two 3-story attached townhouses with two off-street parking spaces.

History

The 1842 extension of the Charlestown Branch Railroad from the Miller's River to Fresh Pond opened up North Cambridge for the brick and ice industries and for suburban development. The area that is now traversed by upper Raymond Street was rich in clay deposits; most of the north slope of Avon Hill between Raymond and Sherman Streets, including today's Raymond Street Park, was originally mined by local brick makers, like the New England Brick Company, and by A. H. Hews & Co., which made clay flower pots.

The northern end of Raymond Street was laid out beyond Walden Street between 1854 and 1873. During this period the New England Brick Company (NEBCO) filled a former clay pit between Walden and Raymond Streets and the Fitchburg Division of the Boston & Maine Railroad and subdivided it into more than 60 house lots on Walden, Raymond, Richdale, and Hubbard streets. While this area was almost entirely built up by 1894, there was still an active brickyard on the west side of Raymond Street in the 1890s.

The former NEBCO/John E. Parry Brick Co. brickyard lot was acquired by the City of Cambridge in the 1890s for the city stable and an incinerator; this lot is now occupied by Walden Square Apartments (1972). Land traversed by Wood Street, Sheridan Street, and Walden Square was gradually released for development from the late 1890s through the 1960s, but few of the lots sold. The 60-unit Lincoln Way veterans' housing project took up many of the unsold lots in the 1940s, and the Cambridge Friends School filled in the last operating clay pit in Cambridge about 1960.

NEBCO sold the lot occupied by 137-139 Walden Street to Mary A. Brogan sometime before 1886. Mary's husband Patrick was a laborer, and the family lived at 51 Raymond Street. Mary was issued a building permit in 1893 for a single-family house at 137 Walden Street, and by 1896 she was listed as a widow living at that address. She sold the house about 1900 to Thomas St. Germaine, who was listed in successive city directories as a broom maker (1900-1903), instructor at Harvard (1904), and instructor at the House of Correction (1909-). Thomas's widow sold the house to Leonard Day, a foreman at the Hews Pottery on Richdale Avenue, who in 1913 obtained a building permit to convert the house to a two-family. Arthur Sims, a chauffeur, acquired the house in the early 1920s and built the garage in 1932. The Sims family was still living there in 1962.

Significance and Recommendation

I recommend that the building at 137-139 Walden Street be found significant for its associations with the New England Brick Company subdivision near its Raymond Street brickyard and in the context of the predominantly pre-WWI residential neighborhood of Walden and Raymond Streets.

The Commission should hear testimony from the applicants and neighbors and review the plans for replacement construction before making a further determination.

cc: Matt Hayes